

East Greenwich School Committee

Tuesday, March 9, 2010

East Greenwich High School Auditorium

300 Avenger Drive

East Greenwich, RI 02818

ANY ITEMS ON THE AGENDA MAY BE SUBJECT TO A VOTE

The regular session of the East Greenwich School Committee was called to order in the East Greenwich High School Auditorium at 6:30 p.m. by Chair, Jean Ann Guliano. Those in attendance were: Jean Ann Guliano, Chair, Anne Palumbo, Vice-Chair, Deidre Gifford, Robert Durant, Susan Records, and Mary Ellen Winters, as well as Superintendent of Schools Dr. Victor Mercurio and Maryanne Crawford, Director of Administration. Mr. Martin was absent.

Aramark Workshop

Tom Hoagland, Dennis Gomez, and Scott Beer from Aramark were present as well as Becky Bessette from the RI Department of Education. Mrs. Guliano stated that in May 2008, when the School Committee met with Aramark they were encouraged to go along with the state contract. School Committee was told we could negotiate with Aramark directly and told we would have a \$5000 surplus. Mrs. Guliano said it was not good news when School Committee found about the deficit. Mrs. Palumbo, who is the School Committee Member on the Wellness Committee, asked for the state contract and

was told she couldn't have it. The School Department puts the onus on RIDE as to how the deficit was handled. Mr. Beer stated that despite what the contract says, Aramark is willing to give the School Committee money in the form of a grant. He added that no one is happy about what happened last year and they will give a grant for the full amount of our deficit which will be amortized over four years. He stated that the budget going forward will be a break even. Mr. Durant noted that the contract says we won't run a deficit. Ms. Bessette stated that lessons were learned last year and noted that the majority of districts had previously worked with Aramark. Mr. Durant's concern is that we are \$48,000 in the hole and it's March. Ms. Bessette stated that they are working to make East Greenwich whole. She also stated that 13 districts in the state that have Aramark had surpluses the last few months. The projections show that we will end the school year with \$1,000 or \$2,000. Mr. Gomez stated that Aramark is confident that \$25,000 grant will cover the deficit. Mr. Durant stated that means we will have a \$21,000 buffer. Mrs. Guliano asked why Aramark can't guarantee us more money. Mr. Beer noted that the fees Aramark earns are very low. Mr. Beer noted that he has been working closely with Dr. Mercurio and Mrs. Crawford to make sure there is no risk to the district this year. He added that if the district wishes to have a conversation during the next three years, they can do so. She added that the Sodexo districts (East Bay districts) are covering their deficits with their management fee. Mrs. Gifford noted that if we don't engage Aramark every year for four years, we could be liable and this locks us into a four year contract.

Mr. Durant noted that even if we go with Aramark for four years, one year at a time, when the contract comes up in three years we may have to raise the costs for lunches. Ms. Bessette noted that the district has total control of setting prices of lunches. Mr. Gomez noted that if we raise the price of lunches it will hurt participation. Ms. Bessette looked at the trends over six years and noted that in three of those years we ran deficits. Part of this is the profile of the districts. She also noted that prices have gone up this year because of extra servings of fruits and vegetables. Mrs. Guliano would like us to start fresh next year. She feels the Department of Education also bears responsibility. Mr. Beer would like all the parties to have additional conversation and include our lawyer. Mr. Gomez wants to bring closure to this. Mr. Durant stated there is nothing we can do today and we'll put this on for an Executive Session discussion with our lawyer present.

I. The regular meeting commenced at 7:10p.m. with the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag

II. Public Comments

Dr. Mercurio stated that the candidate for Football Coach has withdrawn his candidacy and the position will be re-posted and involve the personnel subcommittee will be involved in the process. We will post in April with an appointment in May. He thanked those who worked on the Committee to hire the football coach.

Mr. George Gravelin, Diplomat Drive, former French Teacher and Foreign Language Department Head, spoke on behalf of the possible elimination of a 0.8 French Teacher at East Greenwich High School. He noted that he is also a substitute teacher and he loves the new language lab at the high school. Mr. Gravelin stated that East Greenwich has one of the finest Foreign Language programs in the state. He noted that parents wanted Italian and German in the past but budget issues always made it impossible. He stated that people have been discouraged from signing up for French next school year. He asked the Committee not to cut 0.8 French. Mary Lou Wernig, a high school parent, stated that she found out on March 8th about the cuts in French. She noted that the possibility of reducing French might mean her daughter may not be able to take it. Mrs. Wernig would like the Committee to consider keeping the program. She wondered how it would impact students now in the program. Mrs. Guliano responded that the Committee asked the Superintendent to come back with an impact statement on proposed cuts. Ani Kasparian and Rachel Basso, high school French students, spoke about the program, noting that Latin suffered from low numbers but came back and French will be even more popular in the future. Ani took a survey of 5th and 6th grade students and 118 students said they were interested in taking French. She also presented the Committee with the petition signed by 267 students and 59 teachers. They said keeping French classes will help to keep the high school more competitive. Mrs. Guliano stated that the School Committee

doesn't want to discourage students from taking French. Sally Miranda asked if Mrs. Meyer at Cole could send out an email saying there may have been misperceptions on Monday night during the course selection meeting and add that French is a living entity. Dr. Mercurio noted that he will work with the principals involved to communicate that. Mr. Gravelin thanked the Committee for listening and noted he would be happy to help out.

Mr. Anthony DellaGrotta, Tillinghast Road, asked if the school department was going to re-advertise for football coach. He said he supports Vincent Ucci without question. He said we need to fix this somehow.

Matthew Plain, a 1994 graduate of EGHS, and one of the founders of the Avengers Football Alumni Association, stated that the sentiment of the community is that Vincent Ucci be the football coach. He noted that the community is confident that the selection committee appropriately screened applicants and the criteria put forth. Matthew noted that Vincent chose to pursue a career in education, won awards in college, and has successfully served as a teacher for nine years in the Providence Public Schools. Matthew noted that the selection committee also saw that Vincent served as assistant coach for the past ten years. He stated that the football program has produced skills its players can use in life and has produced leaders in the community and classroom. Matthew stated that Vincent embodies these values and is respected in the community. He asked the Committee to re-review the process and visit it once again. Matthew thanked the School Committee for their service to the community.

Dr. Al Ross, Tanglewood Drive, spoke in favor of keeping the Chorus program. He noted there are studies that prove that adults who receive music training before the age of 12 have long term positive affects and they scored higher on standardized tests. He noted that music is important for our soul and we should keep it and protect it. Mrs. Guliano responded that the Committee asked the Superintendent to find something other than Chorus to cut.

Mr. Kim Petti asked about the interview process for the football coach. Dr. Mercurio responded that the protocol was followed. He added that six candidates were interviewed, with four in the second round. The Superintendent noted that he didn't participate in the process. Dr. Mercurio stated that now the personnel subcommittee will get involved and they will make a recommendation. Mrs. Records, chair of the personnel subcommittee, stated that guidelines for hiring need to be in place and her subcommittee and will look at the procedure for job postings. Mrs. Gifford stated that the procedure was followed and was done in compliance with the School Committee policy. She stated that the process used didn't violate their policy. Mrs. Guliano stated that she was not going to discuss the interview process at this meeting but will wait for the Superintendent to go forward. Mr. Petti asked if the people making the recommendation could be biased and Mrs. Guliano said anyone could be biased. Michael Mernick, stated that he has two sons and he wants them to play for Vincent Ucci.

III. Recognitions

Scholastic Art Award Winners from Cole Middle School were

recognized: Samantha VanWinter-Gold Key in Sculpture; Anoush Calikyan-Gold Key in Printmaking; Alex Deneault-Silver Key in Design; Chris Sgrignari-Silver Key in Sculpture; Roman Smiech-Silver Key in Drawing; Ebed Jarrell-Silver Key in Printmaking.

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IV. Approval of Minutes-This item was not voted on

Correction to Minutes of Joint Executive Session of School Committee and Town Council on November 17, 2009, and February 9 and March 2, 2010 Executive and Regular Session

V. Superintendent's Report-There was no Superintendent's Report

VI. Adoption of 2011 Budget

Mrs. Guliano announced that the 0.8 French position has not been added back into the budget. Mrs. Nota will speak to the Foreign Language Department Chair to see what the program will look like if sections are removed. Mrs. Nota feels that enrollment numbers aren't there and the high school can't afford to hold a class with 7 or 8 students. She also stated that she can't predict the future and didn't take the middle school numbers into consideration. Mrs. Nota thanked the School Committee for their support of the selection committee's process for hiring a football coach.

Mrs. Guliano stated that the Superintendent proposed a 0% budget increase. She also stated that the Chorus Program, Family & Consumer Science and Freshmen Football and basketball programs

are back in the budget. The Superintendent listed the following budget cuts: Raises for administrators (the Superintendent will take a pay freeze for the entire school year and administrators will take a pay freeze for half a year); contribution to COA, Cole Transition Program, Property Liability, and Building Maintenance. It was noted that the school department makes an annual contribution to COA but that may be now made through the grant process from the EG Education Foundation. He added that the Middle School Transition can be done through Title II dollars. Building Maintenance will cuts will be taken care of through the previous Warrant Article Bond.

A parent would like the middle and high schools to send out an email saying that students should sign up for the French program. She feels it isn't good for college transcripts when a student changes languages in high school. Mr. Durant reminder people that the deadline for putting a budget into the town is this week and then the Town Council will make their cuts. Mrs. Guliano's recommendation is to put an \$80,000 reduction in the high school personnel line for the French reduction. Mr. Durant noted that the budget has to be line itemized with the understanding that we may move teacher salaries. Mrs. Guliano stated that the budget will be voted on at a meeting on Friday, March 12, 2010. Mrs. Gifford will not support a personnel cut since the School Committee doesn't want to cut programs. She feels it's the School Committee's responsibility to level fund a budget.

VII. Action Items

a. Parental Leave-This item was not voted on.

1. Stacy Munzert, Art Teacher at EGHS, from 8-30-10 through January

17, 2011

b. Appointment

1. William Conway, Football Coach for East Greenwich High School-This candidate withdrew.

c. School Calendar for 2010-2011-this item was not voted on.

d. Second Reading and Vote on Program of Studies for 2010-2011

Mrs. Nota stated that questions related to the technology requirement that the state demands is currently in flex with the Rhode Island Department of Education. She will find the actual regulation on what the technology requirement will be. She would like students to take this requirement in 9th or 10th grade. Dr. Mercurio also stated that he and Mrs. Nota are in the process of researching a virtual high school, but not necessarily for the next school year. A previous question was asked about Way To Go RI. Mrs. Nota stated that this refers to the Individual Learning Plans (ILP) which starts in 5th and 6th grades. It's a students' pathway and parents have received emails about this pathway which is a way for students to take ownership of their ILP. She noted that we offer more electives than we run, but this depends on what students want. Mrs. Nota stated that she tries to run classes with a minimum of 18 to 20 students. Mrs. Gifford stated that she didn't see language in the Program of Studies that would prohibit students from testing out of the technology requirement. Mrs. Guliano stated she is hesitant to test kids out of a state requirement. Mr. Durant noted that a two week accelerated program was discussed for the summer. Mrs. Nota asked if the class will be free and noted that she is open to creative ideas. Mrs. Gifford stated that the School

Committee feels this 0.5 technology requirement course is not enriching. She noted there should be two choices, either test out or offer a compressed course over the summer. This should be added to the Program of Studies and we can ask the Department of Education. We also need a very solid assessment.

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e. Out-of-State Field Trip to New York on Friday, March 26 and Thursday, April 1, 2010 for Archie Cole Family and Consumer Science Classes-this item was not voted on.

f. Out-of-State Field Trip to Nature's Classroom in Groton, MA (new dates) on April 7, 8 and 9th, 2010 for grade 6 students for Hanaford School and Eldredge School for April 5,6, and 7, 2010-there was no vote on this item.

VIII. Discussion Items

a. Fields Project Update

Dr. Mercurio sent out an email about the gates.

b. UCOA Update-There is no update.

IX. School Committee Concerns

Mrs. Records spoke about the hiring process and stated the subcommittee can come up with clarification as soon as possible. Hiring in house candidates and not posting jobs was already spoken about. Mr. Durant agrees but feels we can look outside also. Mrs. Gifford suggests that we not attempt to re-do our policy and we shouldn't rush into an April hiring date for the football coach. She wants to give our administrators discretion on hiring and send strong

support for them. Mrs. Guliano stated that we are not changing the hiring process itself. Mrs. Records spoke about having a rubric and assigning weight to each candidate. Mrs. Winters stated that hiring has to stop being about a person and be about a program.

X. Adjournment-The meeting was adjourned at 9:43p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Virginia Giuliani

Secretary